

Message Text

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70-62

ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 AID-20 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00

PA-03 RSC-01 USIA-12 PRS-01 CPR-02 M-03 A-01 RSR-01

L-03 /078 W

----- 034277

R 091900Z JUL 73

FM AMEMBASSY KINGSTON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2313

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: APRE, PINT, JM

SUBJ: INCIDENT OF ALLEGED RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

1. THE JULY 2 EVENING RADIO NEWSCAST ALLEGED THAT A KINGSTON PROPERTY AGENT HAD REFUSED TO LET AN APARTMENT TO A 27 YEAR-OLD UNIVERSITY MEDICAL COED ON THE GROUNDS THAT AN AMERICAN AID EMPLOYEE OF THE US EMBASSY, WHO LIVED ON THE SAME PROPERTY, DID NOT WANT THE APARTMENT LET TO A BLACK. THE ITEM WAS REPEATED ON THE JULY 3 MORNING RJR NEWSCAST AND HOURLY THROUGHOUT THE DAY. THE EMBASSY IMMEDIATELY CONDUCTED AN INVESTIGATION AND ISSUED THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT AT ABOUT 4:30 PM ON JULY 3. COPIES WERE GIVEN TO THE PRIME MINISTER AND TO THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE, DUDLEY THOMPSON, AT ABOUT THE SAME TIME.

2. THE EMBASSY STATEMENT READS AS FOLLOWS:

"ON HEARING THE NEWS REPORT TO THE EFFECT THAT AN AMERICAN AID EMPLOYEE IN KINGSTON WAS REPORTED TO HAVE OBJECTED TO THE POSSIBILITY OF HAVING A BLACK JAMAICAN NEIGHBOR, THE EMBASSY HAS CONDUCTED A THOROUGH INVESTIGATION. THE FOLLOWING ARE THE RESULTS:

"- A USAID EMPLOYEE IS THE RESIDENT OF A DETACHED HOUSE ON THE SAME PROPERTY AS THAT DESCRIBED IN THE NEWS REPORT;

"- ON SATURDAY, JUNE 30, THE EMPLOYEE DID ASK THE AGENT FOR THE OWNERS OF THE PROPERTY WHETHER THERE WERE TO BE TWO TENANTS IN

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THE APARTMENT IN QUESTION AND WAS TOLD THERE WOULD NOT.

"- THE SAME APARTMENT HAD PREVIOUSLY BEEN OCCUPIED BY JAMAICANS WITH WHOM THE AID EMPLOYEE HAD BEEN ON THE BEST OF TERMS; THE AMERICAN, IN FACT, HAD OCCASIONALLY BABY SAT FOR THE JAMAICANS.
"- THE AMERICAN EMPLOYEE HAS NO CONTROL OVER WHO WOULD OCCUPY THE APARTMENT IN QUESTION, EXCEPT THAT HE HAD A VERBAL ASSURANCE THAT IT WOULD NOT BE LET TO MORE THAN ONE PERSON BECAUSE OF THE SMALL SIZE OF THE QUARTERS AND PARKING SPACE.
"- THE AMERICAN EMPLOYEE AT NO TIME MADE ANY COMMENT REGARDING WHO SHOULD OCCUPY THE APARTMENT AND FURTHER HAS NO PREFERENCES IN THE MATTER."

3. PERTINENT PARTS OF THE STATEMENT WERE USED ON THE EVENING RJR AND JBC-TV NEWSCASTS AND THE FULL TEXT APPEARED IN THE JULY 5 DAILY GLEANER.

4. WHEN THE COED REPORTED THE INCIDENT TO JAMAICA'S NUMBER ONE "ANTI-RACIST RACIST," SENATOR DUDLEY THOMPSON, HE IMMEDIATELY ROSE TO THE OCCASION AND PROMISED A FULL INVESTIGATION. THE INVESTIGATION CONSISTED, AS FAR AS THE EMBASSY IS AWARE, OF CALLING UNANNOUNCED AT THE AID EMPLOYEE'S HOME WITH THE STUDENT AND SEPARATELY INTERVIEWING THE AGENT. (THE AID EMPLOYEE DID NOT CHECK WITH THE EMBASSY BEFORE TALKING WITH MINISTER THOMPSON SO NO EMBASSY OFFICER WAS PRESENT.) WHILE THOMPSON ASSURED EMBASSY OFFICERS THAT THE AID EMPLOYEE'S STORY WAS CREDIBLE, HE, NEVERTHELESS, WAS UNABLE TO EXONERATE HIM COMPLETELY AND MADE A RADIO STATEMENT TO THE EFFECT THAT RACIAL DISCRIMINATION MUST BE STAMPED OUT AND THAT IF HE FOUND ANY EVIDENCE OF IT AMONG FOREIGNERS IN JAMAICA, THEY WOULD BE ASKED TO LEAVE. THOMPSON'S ACTION IN THIS INSTANCE WAS PREDICTABLE AND ABOUT AS FAR AS A JAMAICAN POLITICIAN WOULD GO UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES. HE SET OUT HIS TERMS OF REFERENCE, THE ACTION HE WOULD TAKE IF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION HAD BEEN FOUND, AND, IN CONCLUSION, OMITTED RECOMMENDING ANY SPECIFIC ACTION. AS FAR AS THOMPSON IS CONCERNED, THE CASE IS PROBABLY CLOSED.

5. THE STORY WAS CARRIED IN THE LOCAL PRESS ON FOUR SEPERATE OCCASIONS, ONCE ALONG WITH THE EMBASSY STATEMENT. THERE HAS BEEN NO PRESS COVERAGE SINCE A STORY IN A JULY 7 WEEKLY JOURNAL.

6. THE EMBASSY UNDERSTANDS THAT THE UNIVERSITY STUDENT HAS NOW LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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MOVED INTO THE APARTMENT AND THAT THREATS OF DEMONSTRATIONS IN FRONT OF THE AID EMPLOYEE'S HOME, CONTAINED IN A LETTER FROM A STUDENT GROUP TO THE PRIME MINISTER, HAVE FAILED TO MATERIALIZE. THE AID EMPLOYEE IS PRESENTLY TAKING A VACATION THAT WAS PLANNED BEFORE THE INCIDENT.

7. THE POINT AT ISSUE. THE PRECISE POINT OF ISSUE IS WHAT THE RENTAL AGENT WAS TOLD BY THE AID EMPLOYEE. THERE WERE ONLY TWO

PERSONS INVOLVED AND THEIR STORIES ARE DIAMETRICALLY OPPOSED. CAREFUL EMBASSY EXAMINATION OF THE AID EMPLOYEE INVOLVED DID NOT BUDGE HIM FROM HIS VERSION OF THE MEETING. THOMPSON HAS THE ADVANTAGE BECAUSE HE WAS ABLE TO INTERVIEW BOTH PARTIES. THE EMBASSY DOES NOT BELIEVE IT WOULD BE APPROPRIATE FOR US TO ATTEMPT TO QUESTION THE AGENT INVOLVED.

8. THE INCIDENT AND THE MANNER OF ITS HANDLING BY LOCAL MEDIA WERE UNFORTUNATE FROM A PUBLIC RELATIONS VIEWPOINT. HOWEVER, THE UNLIKELIHOOD OF ESTABLISHING BEYOND QUESTION WHICH WITNESS WAS TELLING THE TRUTH IS PROBABLY THE BASIC REASON THE PRESS NOW APPEARS PREPARED TO LET THE MATTER DIE AND THAT DUDLEY THOMPSON APPEARS PREPARED TO RETREAT FROM INVOLVEMENT.

9. THE RESOLUTION OF THIS INCIDENT IS UNSATISFACTORY, BUT TO KEEP IT OPEN WOULD APPEAR TO SERVE NO ONE'S INTEREST, A CONCLUSION WHICH, HOPEFULLY THE INVOLVED JAMAICANS ALSO SHARE.
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